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NOTES ON A VERPA.

Edith Hyde, Lancaster, O.

The interesting fungus shown in Fig. 187, called by the botanists *Verpa digitaliformis,* was found north of Lancaster, in a cool, moist and shady ravine early in May. The color of its pileus, or cap, is a kind of olive-umber, while the stem is nearly white, with a very slight reddish tinge. The pileus is campanulate, or bell-shaped, ½—¾ in. high, fitting over the stem, but not attached except at the very top. Its surface has the characteristic smoothness of the *Verpas.* The stem appears smooth to the naked eye except for the few reddish rootlike shreds found at the base. It is filled with a loosely fibrous pith. It is about 3—4 in. high, and one-third to three-quarters inch thick.

The asci are long, regular, colorless cells, situated on the under side of the cap. Each ascus produces eight spores within. Figure 188 shows four of these asci, one of which is spontaneously breaking open at the end in the characteristic manner and thus liberating the spores. The spores are elliptical and almost free of the granular contents, so conspicuous in the spores of some genera of fungi.

This species is edible according to the mycophagists, and resembles the Helvella in its delicacy. It is said to be on sale in the markets in Italy. It was named by Persoon, an eminent European botanist, a century ago. He gave it the name *digitaliformis* (meaning finger) because suggestive of the shape of the pileus, which fits like a thimble over the stem. The generic name *Verpa* (meaning a rod) was probably given to the genus because of the prominence of the rod-like stem.

This mushroom belongs to the family *Helvellaceae.* This family includes four important genera, which may be divided into two groups.

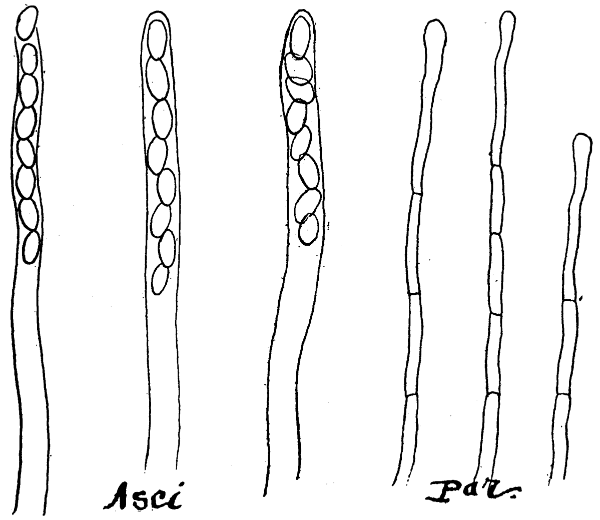

Fig. 188. VER'-PA DIG-I-TAL-I-FOR'-MIS. A sketch of *asci* with *spores,* also *paraphyses* highly magnified.

The first, including the *Helvella* and the *Verpa,* is characterized especially by the pileus or cap being free from the sides of the stem. The second group, including the *Morchella* and *Gyromitra,* has the pileus entirely attached to the stem. These genera need not be confused, since the *Helvella* has a drooping pileus, irregularly lobed or waved, while the *Verpa* has the drooping pileus but comparatively smooth and with an entire margin. The *Morchella,* on the other hand, has the pileus attached to the stem and covered with deep irregular pits, while the *Gyromitra,* also attached, is composed of rounded, variously contorted folds.

Explanation of figures:—The accompanying half-tone is a life size reproduction from a photograph of five of the specimens. The one in the upper right hand corner is old with a split and ragged pileus; the one just below it is a vertical section, showing the pithy contents of the stem. The two circles in the middle below are cross-sections of the stem. The outline sketches, Fig. 188, represent asci and paraphyses; one ascus is broken open to discharge the spores. The paraphyses or slender cells accompanying the asci have septa, or cross-walls, which is not a common characteristic. The plants in the half-tone are represented natural size; the outline figures of asci, paraphyses and spores are highly magnified.

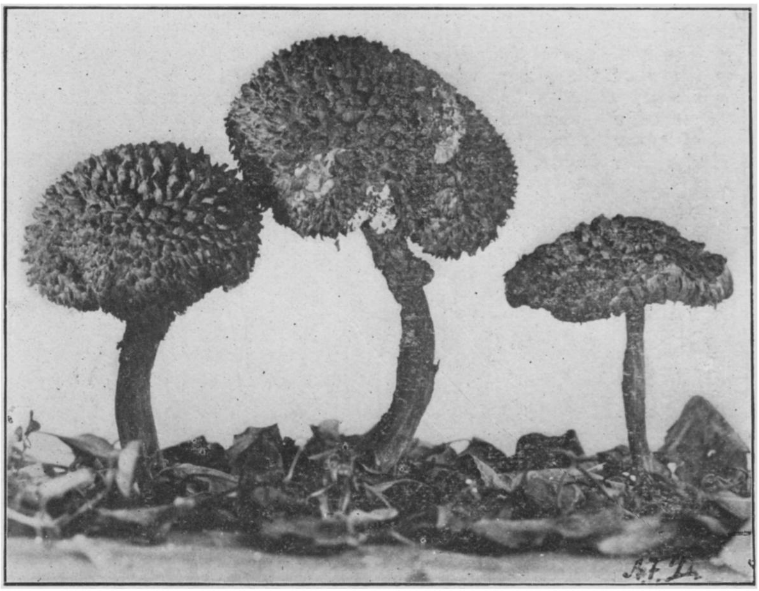

Fig. 189. STRO-BI-LOM'-Y-CES STRO-VI-LA'-CE-US. A mushroom belonging to the family BO-LE-TA'-CE-AE—having pores on the under side of the cam somewhat similar to a *Polypores.* The peculiar wart-like tufts give it a strange aspect and seen in the field or open woods it would never be mistaken. This half-tone from a photograph taken in the winter by Mr. A. F. Lane, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, illustrates the appearance of a preserved dry specimen.

The Mycological Bulletin is issued Monthly, Price 25c. Copies of Vol. II (1904) and Vol III (1905) may be had for 50 cents each, or cloth bound copies for 75 cents. No. copies remain of Vol. I (1902). Address W. A. Kellerman, Columbus, Ohio